

S E R M O N

DELIVERED

IN THE METHODIST CHAPEL, SAINT JOHN, N. B.
ON SUNDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1821,

WHEN A COLLECTION WAS MADE IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE

NEW-BRUNSWICK AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY,

By J. PRIESTLEY.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.—ISAIAH.

I consider the extension and unity of the Bible Society as the best pledge of the continuance of the Divine Mercy to this land; and I doubt not the time will come, when the nation will reckon that Society a greater honour to her, as a christian people, than any other institution of which she can boast.

Rev. Dr. BUCHANAN.

The morality of our holy religion is so salutary to civil society, its promises of a future state so consolatory to individuals, its precepts so suited to the deductions of the most improved reason, that it must finally prevail throughout the world.

Dr. WATSON, *Bishop of Llandaff.*

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

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1821

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TO
THE PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENTS,
AND
COMMITTEE
OF THE
NEW-BRUNSWICK AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY,
THIS SERMON, PREACHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
AND
NOW PUBLISHED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE WISHES OF FRIENDS,

Is respectfully inscribed,

By the

AUTHOR.



A SERMON, &c.

ACTS ii. 7—11.

“And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, are not all these which speak Galileans? and how hear we every man speak in our tongue wherein we were born?—Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

VOLUMES have been written on the *origin* of language; and the obscurity in which the subject is involved has given existence and currency to various opinions and conjectures. But as opinion is not knowledge, nor conjecture principle, and as nothing more is known of a subject than what is *proved*; so nothing here is known with certainty except what may be collected from the intimation of the Jewish Law-giver:—he intimates that the *rudiments* of language were given to man by his Creator; for *Adam named all creatures.*

BUT whatsoever was the *origin* of Language, the *possession* of it is peculiar to man, and is his peculiar ornament and distinction. Of the bodies of mere animals we say, as we do of our own,—“they are wonderfully made.” The power of instinct in many of them is truly surprising. Some of them have organs so analagous to those of speech in man as scarcely to be distinguished from them. But still the faculty of speech is, in a great measure, the criterion between man and the brute creation. Reason, without this, would have remained in inactivity, its energies unexcited, and its faculties torpid.

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THE time was when the communication of sentiment, from man to man, was not restrained nor impeded by a variety of languages, for, as the sacred historian says, *The whole earth was of one Language and one Speech.* Then it was that the people formed the rebellious design of building a tower on the fertile plains of *Shinar*; partly, as is supposed, for idolatrous purposes, but principally to prevent their dispersion. Both of these purposes, if realized, would have proved inimical to the interests of man, and repugnant to the Almighty's intentions, he therefore frustrated their plans by confounding their language, so that they could not understand one another's speech; and they became united in nothing but in a wish to separate.

So many inconveniences have resulted to man from this confusion of tongues, that were the scripture silent on the subject, we should probably infer that it was inflicted on him for the violation of some law, or as an antidote against such violation.

FROM this very circumstance great inconvenience was probably apprehended by this medley of persons, who were convened at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, to witness the descent of the Holy Ghost. None of the Apostles could expect to be understood except by a very few persons. There were a hundred and twenty worshippers, and these are to be divided into fifteen or sixteen different classes; for so many languages it is believed, were spoken. But, when agreeably to the expectation of these devout worshippers, and the prediction of Him whose word is surer than heaven and earth, the Holy Spirit descended upon them in copious effusions, this inconvenience no longer existed, but *every man heard them speak in his own tongue.* If a Roman advanced towards the Apostles he would be addressed in Latin; if an Arabian, he would be addressed in Arabic; and so of the others. This, together with the concomitant phenomena, struck beholders with amazement. "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another—we do hear them speak in our own tongues, the wonderful works of God."

BUT may we not regard these words as the language of the

the whole world, when the Bible shall have been translated into every language of it, and when *the* Book shall have been universally diffused? Then men of every clime may take up their Bibles, and with wonder and joy exclaim—referring to the Prophets, our Lord, and his Apostles—“We do hear them speak in *our* tongues the wonderful works of God.”

RECEIVING these words in this way of accommodation, we shall proceed to discuss the following propositions :

THAT THE WORKS OF GOD ARE WONDERFUL ;

THAT IT IS DESIRABLE THAT EVERY MAN SHOULD HEAR THEM IN HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE ;

THAT THIS IS ATTAINABLE ;

THAT THE ONLY WAY TO ATTAIN IT FULLY, IS BY A UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ;

THAT “THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY,” IS AN INSTITUTION ADMIRABLY CALCULATED TO ATCHIEVE THIS DESIRABLE END ;—AND,

THAT, THEREFORE, IT IS EVERY PERSON’S DUTY TO EXTEND TO IT ALL THE PATRONAGE AND SUPPORT HE MAY POSSESS.

FIRST—*The Works of God are wonderful.* This is a fact sacred to be doubted, and too obvious to be denied. wonderful *Being* ; as all must acknowledge who plate him as the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords ; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. He is infinitely happy and perfect. The annihilation of every creature could not diminish his felicity, nor does their existence augment it. He is illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his nature ; so wise as to preclude the possibility of error, and so good that he cannot be unkind.

Now all nature declares that her productions resemble the sources whence they emanate—*Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.* We are in the daily practice of applying the same rule to the operations of men. We do not, for instance, expect a sage-like production

duction from one who is really, or comparatively an idiot; nor do we expect from a writer, of creditable talents as an author, a composition of folly and absurdity. The usual practice is to judge of an author by his work; yet, there are cases when we judge of a work by its author: that is, we have such knowledge of the writer's wisdom and prudence, that we cannot think he will obtrude upon the public any thing unworthy of its acceptance. Hence we no sooner learn that he has published a work, than we purchase without hesitancy, and read with avidity.

In like manner, we are no sooner apprised of the character of God, as it has been briefly delineated, than we expect his works of nature, providence and grace will prove worthy of his wisdom, power and goodness. Nor shall we be disappointed—*The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein*—They are wise in their contrivance, multitudinous in their numbers, beautiful in their appearances, regular in their operations, and beneficial in their tendencies. To contemplate them frequently is both an important duty and a source of ineffable delight.

THE WORKS OF PROVIDENCE are wonderful. Providence is the Supreme Being in motion. He does what seemeth good to him, among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth. Every element is under his control. He holds the wind in his fist. He determines the quarter from which it blows; the time of its rising and falling, together with the degrees of its influence. Every living creature stands before him and ministers to him. He says to one, go, and it goeth; to another, come, and it cometh. At his bidding beasts and fowls go to Adam for names; to Noah for refuge, and an inhabitant of the ocean collects tribute for him who owns the gold and the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. He moves—and valleys rise and mountains become a plain. He determines the places of our birth, and the circumstances of our lives. The kingdoms of the world he gives to whom he will; for, as Daniel declares, *He removeth kings, and setteth up kings*. He rejected Saul, and gave the kingdom to Jesse's youngest

est son, a lowly shepherd. He took the ten tribes from Rehoboam, and gave them to Jeroboam, originally an inferior officer in his service. Thus he took Egypt from Pharaoh-hophra and gave it to the King of Babylon.

BUT the text, we apprehend, speaks principally of the wonderful work of *Redemption*. This is pre-eminently wonderful. Such as the sun never before witnessed ; nor does history record any such event. The holy angels, proverbial for knowledge as they are, could never have contrived such a scheme. The Apostle Peter assures us that it is the subject of their study.—“ The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, into which things the angels desire to look.” Redemption is the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is God with men, and man with God :—“ God manifested in the flesh.” A union, in the Redeemer, of omnipotence and weakness ; riches and poverty ; infinity and limitation ; life and death ; honour and degradation ; immutability and changeableness.

EXPERIMENTAL *religion* may be here referred to as a wonderful work of God. As this would never have had an existence in the world without a revelation from God ; so it can have no existence in the heart of man without the mysterious operation of his spirit : so mysterious that our Saviour compares it to the wind, which of all the phenomena of nature, is the least apprehensible in its essence and the most sensible in its effects.—Were this a work of man it would wear his resemblance. Man is depraved. “ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?” No effect can exceed its cause ; and an inadequate cause is no cause at all.

THE Religion of Christ is wonderfully suited to the condition of man. It is more wise in its contrivance, more holy in its influence, more perfect in its nature, and more advantageous in its effects, than any system that was ever presented to the attention of the world. It came from God : like him it is perfect : while it accommodates itself to the simple, it endears itself to the judicious part of mankind.

FROM these particulars we infer the truth of our SECOND Proposition,

Proposition, namely, *It is desirable that every man should hear these wonderful works in his native language.*

THE Bible, where God's wonderful works are exhibited, gives dignity to the meanest cottage, and adds lustre to the most superb palace. The day on which a Bible enters a country, its importance commences in the eyes of angels. Then, and not before, it may be said, "Arise, shine, thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It was the possession of the Scriptures that gave the Jewish a decided pre-eminence over other nations:—"Unto them was committed the oracles of God." The day on which the Bible takes its departure from a country *Ichabod* may be inscribed on its walls:—"The glory is departed."

THE Gospel is a *real* blessing. All others are but as *shadows*. Being earthly in their origin, they are unsatisfying in their use, and *transitory* in their duration. The light that we behold—the food we receive—the raiment that we put on—the air we breathe—the friends that we enjoy—though all of them blessings, are far from being *secure*. But, if with the report of God's word, we receive the grace that it proclaims, we have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; a Father that never leaves his children orphans; a garment of salvation, which neither time nor eternity can impair; bread to eat of which the world has no conception, and under the blessed beams of the Sun of righteousness, we find healing and refreshment: we breathe a new air, and live in a salubrious atmosphere.

THE word of God is a great blessing. It proclaims the curse removed—mankind redeemed—God reconciled—sin pardoned—peace implanted—divine strength conferred—salvation secured: Not mines of gold, rivers of oil, nor fields covered with perpetual verdure, are to be compared with the blessings of the Gospel. He who enjoys them has a happiness that depends not upon external circumstances. He has sources of enjoyment, when those of the wicked are exhausted. Hear his language: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;

meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation."

IN every country the Bible finds men in the same condition, and in that deplorable condition, it holds out to them the same grace and encouragement. It has been called the religion of sinners ; and really it is the only religion that meets their condition :—that illumines what is dark, and pardons what is wrong. How desirable, then, is it, that all men should have this precious book in their own language ! But as many things are desirable which are not attainable, we proceed to discuss our THIRD Proposition, namely, *that this object is attainable* : this we argue,

1. FROM the *efficacy* of the Gospel, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater ; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The Gospel is not only a system of morality, but a source of divine agency, which exerts itself upon the minds of those who properly read it. "It is the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth." It has awakened the most secure ; has mollified the most obdurate hearts ; has comforted the greatest sufferers : millions have proved it to be the cause of their reformation and renewal. It "brings" both the discovery and the experience of salvation. How weak and unoperative are all the systems of human philosophy compared with the efficacy of the Gospel ! One of the celebrated men of antiquity might well indulge the feelings of despondency, occasioned by the deficiency of his philosophical principles, and in all the bitterness of voluble and disheartening soliloquy complain, that he could not bring over the inhabitants of one village to live by the rules of his dictation. Indeed, "long did philosophy brood over the miseries of her children, and long did she amuse herself in devising schemes for their relief. In the religion of Jesus we find all that
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'the wisdom of the world' could never disclose,—a remedy for all the diseases of our nature, a balm for the bleeding heart, a substitute for the want of human comforts, a pillow for the bed of death. Its treasures enrich the cottage of the poor. Its vivifying energy communicates new life to the decrepitude of age. Its consolations support the fainting spirit when surrounding objects can no longer charm. Its hopes irradiate the vale of death."*

If such is the efficiency of the Gospel, it is in vain to deplore the want of miracles to accompany its circulation. The Bible is never sent without its author; its author is God; God is mighty in operation. Suppose miracles to accompany the dissemination of the holy Oracles, what could be gained by them? "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets neither would they be persuaded though" the miracle of one "rising from the dead" were afforded them. But let the word of God go forth, accompanied by his spirit, and, lo! the work is done.

THAT the word of God shall universally prevail, we argue, *secondly*, from the language of *prophecy*. It has been remarked, that he who is acquainted with the history of past ages, and who is conversant with present occurrences, lives *twice*. At his bidding, peasants and princes; the learned and the illiterate; the noble and ignoble; statesmen and heroes, with all their follies and excellencies present themselves before him, though they have been for ages dead. He sees the origin of power; the progress of science; the sources of wealth; the windings of dominion, and the secret springs of national decay.

With equal propriety it may be said, that he, who is acquainted with the prophetic writings of the Bible, lives *thrice*. His existence is extended beyond its natural limits, and those future events which are the highest in the economy of Providence are, in some degree, opened to his view. Not that our views of the prophetic writings, even after the most diligent and laborious study of them, will be perfectly distinct and satisfactory. It is in general, here, if any where, that "we see through a glass darkly." And as to some of these prophecies we may reasonably conclude that

* Rev. Dr BURNS.

that their interpretation shall not arrive before their accomplishment. Some of these prophecies, however, are expressed in language so luminous and unequivocal that "he who runs may read." Such are those which refer to the extension of the Messiah's empire, which shall be co-extensive with human habitation, and as lasting as the pillars of Jehovah's throne. "His name shall endure for ever: all nations shall call him blessed." Can we ascertain the number of converts that shall be brought to Christ in the latter day of glory? Surely not. Neither can we number the people of every nation, people and tongue, that "shall fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows."

BUT it would be the essence of enthusiasm to expect the attainment of this object, without employing such means as God has put into our hands; and, our FOURTH Proposition states, *That this cannot be attained without the universal diffusion of the holy Scriptures.*

Much may be learned concerning God by the works of creation.—"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." These may be regarded as the alphabet of a language: but it is the Bible that connects these letters and teaches us to read.—"He has magnified his word above all his name"—All other displays of God are *partial*, and comparatively unimportant. They hold forth the divine attributes separately, and teach us nothing of their harmony, limitations, and extent. If we could gather from these, that there was a God, just and merciful, it would be impossible to say where the exercise of justice would end, and the operations of mercy commence.

THIS will be further corroborated by a review of the effects produced by the schemes of religion that took place in the heathen world. How defective were their views of the *Supreme Being*! And how futile were the apprehensions that they entertained concerning a multiplicity of *subordinate* deities! How gross must their sentiments have been when they could ascribe to their gods unhallowed passions, and erect temples for the performance of impure and abominable rites! How dark must their minds have become when

when they could worship dumb idols and pray to them for protection ! When mankind had such mean ideas of the beings whom they worshipped, as to believe them capable of the basest vices, could any thing be expected of them, under these circumstances, but that their sentiments of morality should be erroneous, and that they should call good evil and evil good ?

Nor is the moral condition of those who are without the divine records, now, better than it formerly was. Let us direct our attention to the east and view the peopled valleys of Asia. Here is a country lovely to behold ; a country which claims the honour of having been first inhabited by the human race. Here the Saviour of the world was born ; “ went about doing good ” ; and “ once suffered the just for the unjust.” Yet, honoured as it was in *other* days, darkness *now* covers that part of the world and gross darkness the people. In Asia there are five hundred millions of souls, who, with few exceptions, have no god, except the gods that sanction vice ; no sacrifices, except those of folly and blood ; no priests, except a race of jugglers, impostors and murderers ; no holy days, except such as debase by their levity, corrupt by their sensuality, and harden by their cruelty.

The human bones, which, for the space of fifty miles, cover and whiten the plain—the insatiate vultures that feast on human flesh, and which, here, have acquired a tameness terrible to behold—the weary pilgrims, who faint, groan, and die while on their way to Juggernaut—the deluded multitudes who fall a sacrifice to the ponderous wheels of that stupendous car—the human bones which are cast on the funeral pile—the clouds of smoke which ascend from those dear-bought offerings—the streams of blood which are drawn from those costly sacrifices—the shouts of joy that rend the air at the sight of the purple gore :—these scenes of woe and barbarity shew the deplorable situation of those who are without God’s Word. With little difference as to religious rites, the same description suits thirty millions of the race of *Ham*. Ignorance the most profound ; imaginations the most extravagant ; and crimes the most daring,
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have ever distinguished the world "lying in the arms of the wicked one."

HENCE, Pagans are *unhappy*. "There is no peace to the wicked." What are all their cruel sacrifices but proofs of the writhings and agonies of a guilty conscience labouring for liberty and peace? They feel themselves to be miserable, hence infer their gods are angry. A sacrifice is brought—perhaps a smiling infant, or aged parent. But does this produce happiness? No: the act of murder cannot produce peace. What must be the feelings—what the anxiety—what the horror of those, whose hands are drenched in human blood? So far is their history from being a history of happiness, that it is the history of blood, horror and misery.

THE heathens are *unsafe*. The contrary opinion indeed too generally prevails. The true question in this cause is, we humbly apprehend, often mistaken. It is not whether it be *possible* for the heathens to be saved—that we grant. But that very circumstance proves the state of the heathen to be more dangerous than if such a possibility could *not* be proved. The possibility of their salvation indisputably shews them to be subjects of moral government, and, therefore, liable to aggravated punishment in case of disobedience. The true question is this: Are the heathens—idolatrous and wicked as they are—safe? On this solemn subject we should be bound to speak with great diffidence, were it left to the decision of authority merely human. But *Inspiration* has decided it: and when human opinions come in contact with the declarations of revelation, there is not one of you who will hesitate to say, "Let God be true and every man a liar." The reasoning of the Apostle in the first of the Romans is of universal application; it bears no marks of particularity, and there is not, in our day any one circumstance that calls upon us to narrow the application. His conclusion, is that, for all their crimes, they are without excuse. They are ignorant, but it is because they do not love to retain the knowledge of God in their minds. They have a law written on their hearts, but they violate it; they have a conscience, which accuses or else excuses, but they disregard its dictates. THEREFORE, they are without excuse.

Now

Now what is the remedy for all these evils? The remedy—the *Catholicon* for them is the Bible. Where it properly prevails, it will produce two effects: it will *civilize* and *christianize*. There is both a natural and actual connexion between a proper reception of the Bible and civilization.—Just in proportion to its range in heathenish lands, we shall see them emerging from the depths of barbarism, and becoming honourable and useful members of civil society. The plundering Arab will relinquish his nefarious practices: the Bible will teach, “Let him who stole steal no more; let him provide things honest in the sight of all men.” The ferocious savage, whose heart could not pity, and whose hands were reluctant to relieve the necessitous, shall learn to foster the emotions of sympathy; “to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice.” The hardy Laplander will feel its power, and his frozen heart shall begin to glow with the celestial fire of pure devotion. The fable African will be delivered from his galling chains, and the fierce shafts of cruelty shall pierce him no more, while our Saviour’s golden rule of morality shall be known, revered, and practised:—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

THE Bible, where it properly prevails, will *christianize*. There are not wanting those, who would restrict your exertions, and confine them, exclusively, to the civilization of the world. They talk in this way:—“civilize the savage, teach him how to cultivate his intellect and till the ground, but leave alone his religion.” Such a man is in character, who, having no religion of his own, would gladly find himself countenanced in the dreadful deficiency by a world of deists and idolators.

BUT suppose, that, out of compliment to men devoid of religion, efforts were made in their own way to civilize Pagan lands; and, suppose, that upon this reduced scale of operation, they should be as successful as they could desire, what would be achieved, viewing man through all the range of his existence? It is true, the man of the woods would become the man of the city; the savage would be elevated

elevated into the sage. But while the light of science would be poured upon his path, and it would be strewed with the flowers of literature; yet, if left to the dominion of his vices, it is the path of perdition. He has been taught to "fare sumptuously every day," but this, in *his* case, is only like pampering the wretch who is on his way to execution; you strip him of his sheep-karros, and clothe him with "fine linen," but this is only to fit him for becoming an associate with *Dives*. You exchange the earthly hillock in the wilderness for the sculptured monument, on which some skillful artificer may exuberantly depict a high sounding epitaph, and emblazon deeds of renown, but while his ashes repose in grandeur, the worm that never dies destroys his soul, and the fire that cannot be quenched is consuming his peace. But let men first aim to save the soul of the heathen, and then as they proceed to the ultimate end of their exertions, they will not fail to scatter over the path of benevolence the seeds of civilization and social order.

THE word of God will produce a truly christian spirit. Let this book continue its progress, and instead of thousands and tens of thousands falling prostrate before their dumb idols, they shall fall down to worship the living God. Their heathenish rites will be abolished, and their altars overthrown. Their temples being destroyed, they will immediately erect others, to the honour of him "who made heaven and earth and all things therein." To these temples they will repair, inquiring their way to Zion with their faces thitherward.

THE Gospel will point out to them the path of peace, the shining road which leads to eternal life. The doctrine of the cross, as the main-spring in the christian system, will set every wheel in motion. This doctrine will shew them the malignant nature of sin, and humble them in the dust before God on account of their iniquities. It will win their hearts—captivate their affections—sooth their sorrows, and cause their feet to run swiftly in the path of obedience.

It will purge the moral atmosphere of Pagan lands of every noxious vapour: the pulse of the new man will begin to beat, and the heathen will find that "there is yet balm in Gilead, and yet a physician there."

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THE word of God will teach them how to *die*. Having a hope blooming with immortality, when they approach the dreary confines of the grave, "they will fear no evil;" upheld by the Saviour they will defy the powers of darkness, and smile on the horrors of the tomb, desiring "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." When released from their earthly tabernacles, their souls, like a bird emerging into liberty, shall expatiate on the plains of light and bliss. Immensity shall be the measure, and eternity the duration, of their joy.

FIFTHLY.—"THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY" IS AN INSTITUTION ADMIRABLY CALCULATED TO DIFFUSE UNIVERSALLY THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. There are many considerations connected with this Institution, which clearly indicate the interposition of divine Providence. It was formed at a TIME when a systematic attack had been made on the Scriptures. Many had imbibed the principles of infidelity; and the existing political authorities of one leading European nation, were so abandoned to the spirit of scepticism and delusion as to disbelieve divine Revelation, and openly declare their hostility to its principles. Loud and frequent were the boastings of this anti-scriptural confederacy; and they threatened, in all the madness of anticipated triumph, to drive those old enthusiasts, the Prophets and Apostles, out of the world. But he that sitteth in the Heavens laughed them to scorn: the God of the Bible had its enemies in derision. About the crisis of this impiety the magnanimous Institution of which we are speaking was commenced.

THE *place* where this Society was formed reminds us of the hand of a watchful and interposing Providence. The geographical situation of Great-Britain; her numerous commercial relations; the extent of her naval resources; the character of her people,—were such as to make this place, above all others, the most eligible for giving birth and extensive range to this unrivalled association. The King of England was decidedly friendly the circulation of the Holy Writings. When Prince of Wales, and in the vigour of his days, though surrounded by all those temptations incidental

cidental to persons in stations so elevated, yet, he shewed his warm attachment to the Scriptures and his detestation of anti-christian principles by purchasing, for distribution among his friends, one hundred pounds, worth of "Dr. Leland's view of Deistical writers." Princes of the blood Royal; the most distinguished Patriots and Statesmen; some of those Prelates of the United Church, most celebrated for erudition and piety; the Rev. the Presbyteries of Scotland, and dissenters of almost every name—many of whom were inferior to none of the preceding, in the extent of their natural and acquired abilities, in zeal for the welfare of men, piety to God, and love to their country—came cheerfully forward to enrol their names among the friends of the Bible Society: they enlisted under its banners, and declared themselves willing and determined to fight its "bloodless" battles.

THE *simplicity* of its nature shews it to be admirably adapted to secure the universal diffusion of the Scriptures. Artlessness and simplicity are inscribed on the face of it. Nor does this detract from its majesty, for it is

"Like the ethereal sphere we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity."

It is perhaps the only religious Institution in the world in which good men of all parties can conscientiously unite. In minor things, differences of opinion exist among men equally wise and pious; and they probably will exist until the church on earth shall be translated to heaven. Here christians of all denominations may meet together with the greatest cordiality, and feel that "the Lord is the maker of them all:" here neither compromise of principle nor violation of faith is required. This Society, simple, original, and comprehensive in its plan, disdains to know any distinction of sect or party. Equally open to "Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond and Free" to aid its exertions, or receive its benefits, it calculates upon unparalleled utility, and embraces in its vast design the communication of the word of God, to "every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue."

AND

AND, yet, differing as the Members of this Society do in many things, the reflection is pleasing, that the harmony and unanimity that connect them together have never been interrupted. It was said of the primitive christians that they were of "one heart." So it is here. The dew of Hermon has not lost its refreshing quality ; the ointment poured on the head of Aaron still retains all its fragrance. Every spectator is induced to exclaim, see, "how pleasant 'tis for brethren to dwell together in unity."

THE *eagernefs* with which the Scriptures are *received* by those to whom they are sent is a circumstance highly auspicious. How shall we account for this, knowing as we must, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God?" We explain it thus:—"The people shall be willing in the day of thy power." All the Protestant Churches had their birth amidst the convulsions of political elements, and their cradle was rocked by storms ; but now the principles of the Reformation go abroad like a soft and beauteous sun-rise, shedding rays which are not only welcomed, but which are hailed with acclamations of joy, and ascriptions of praise to "the Prince of peace," and Author of concord. What is this but a cheering prelude to that glorious epoch when the reproving words of the Saviour to the Jews, "they could discern the face of the sky but not the signs of the times ;" and the equally reproving words of the Evangelist, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not," shall lose—lose forever their application ?

IN former times when the light of the Gospel faded away among men, none sighed at the approach of night ; none laid hold on the truth as Jacob on the Angel, saying, "I will not let thee go : " but the shadows of the evening were welcomed, and the Angel was repulsed. Is not this favourable alteration a pledge of ultimate and universal success ? It is the quickening and exhilarating freshness that goes before the morning ; it is the rising breeze which indicates the descending and universal shower.

BEARING in mind what has been said of this Institution, we shall be the less surpris'd at its unparalleled success.

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At its commencement, this Society was as the cloud little as the human hand ; it was as a handful of corn scattered on the mountains, but which now shakes as the cedars in Lebanon. It was only as a spark of fire which scarcely glimmered over the regions of darkness, but which now, like the orb of day, travelling in the greatness of his strength, illuminates tens of thousands by its clear and steady radiance. This Society is like a willow planted by a river of water ; its leaves do not wither, and whatsoever it does prospers. Hard must that heart be, that does not feel gratitude ; impenetrable must be the film that obscures the vision of him, who does not here see the hand of Jehovah ; and paralyzed must be that tongue, which does not exclaim, " what hath God wrought ! "

If this Christian Society has already done so much, what may we not hope it will be enabled to do in future ? Extending our views beyond those regions where revelation has not yet scattered her feeblest rays, we may anticipate, with exultation, the period when the Bible Society will penetrate the thickest darkness of Pagan lands, and, by the torch of divine truth, expose the foolish superstitions, the obscene rites, and horrid cruelties of heathenism in all its forms—expose them to the abhorrence of their present deluded votaries. We must now proceed to discuss our SIXTH proposition—*That it is every one's duty to extend to this Institution all the patronage and support he may possess.*

MAN is not the proprietor, but only a steward of the manifold blessings of God : He gives ; man diffuses. Thus are we elevated to the high honour of being humble imitators of him " who went about doing good," and of being almoners of the divine bounty. But the Bible above all other gifts of God, we should be ambitious and zealous to circulate.

ALL men are children of the same parent, " who hath made of one blood all the dwellers upon earth." Consequently we are related to men of every clime. What opinion would be entertained of him who seeing one so nearly allied to him by the ties of nature as a brother, tossed on the enraged and tempestuous billows, and which are ready to

to overwhelm him, and who will not make an effort to rescue him from a watery grave ; or who seeing so near a relation ready to die of hunger, while he has "bread enough and to spare," but will not bestow upon him, who is in circumstances so painful, a solitary morsel ? Would he not be charged with the indulgence of dispositions worse than brutal ? By far the greater part of our brethren are ready to be imbosomed in the billows of divine wrath ; shall we not endeavour to save them ? They are perishing for want of spiritual bread ; shall we not give them at least "the crumbs that fall from our Master's table ?"

THE performance of this duty is enforced by the rules of *justice*. The time was when the nation to which we belong sat in the region and shadow of death. From the shores of Asia the word of life was received. The Asiatics, through their lukewarmness and indifference, have forfeited the sacred treasure, and have been generally deprived of it. The Gospel has been taken away and they know not where it is laid. They say in a tone of distress, and in accents of justice, "come over and help us."

THIS duty is further enforced by the *rules* of our *profession as christians*. Nothing is more palpable than that to be a christian is to resemble Christ. We profess to take him for our pattern. "He has left us an example that we should tread in his steps." Let the mind be in you which was in him—universal good will to the fallen race—a desire that all should come unto him and call upon him from the rising to the setting sun.

It is very possible that there may be some in this congregation who are warm friends to our association, who cannot forward the objects of it by pecuniary assistance. But it is hoped that you will pray for its prosperity. Divine grace is given in answer to prayer. Without this grace we can do nothing. It were as wise to hope to assume the direction of the wind or the control of the waves as to hope to evangelize the world by our unaided exertions. If the pecuniary resources of this Society were as ample as the revenue of Great-Britain, and its friends as numerous as the stars of heaven ; and if each of its friends united in himself
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the learning of Paul and the eloquence of Apollos, they would sow and water in vain unless the increase were given of God. Having our minds powerfully impressed with this necessary and salutary truth, let us conclude by devoutly praying in the words of Moses :—" Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children ; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us : yea the work of our hands establish thou it."



In the preceding Discourse several sentences are taken from the Works of the Rev. WILLIAM J. a Dissenting Minister ; several from a Sermon published by the Rev. RICHARD WATSON ; and a few from Speeches delivered by the Reverend R. WATSON, and the Rev. JABEZ BUNTING, A. M. Methodist Ministers.

J. P.